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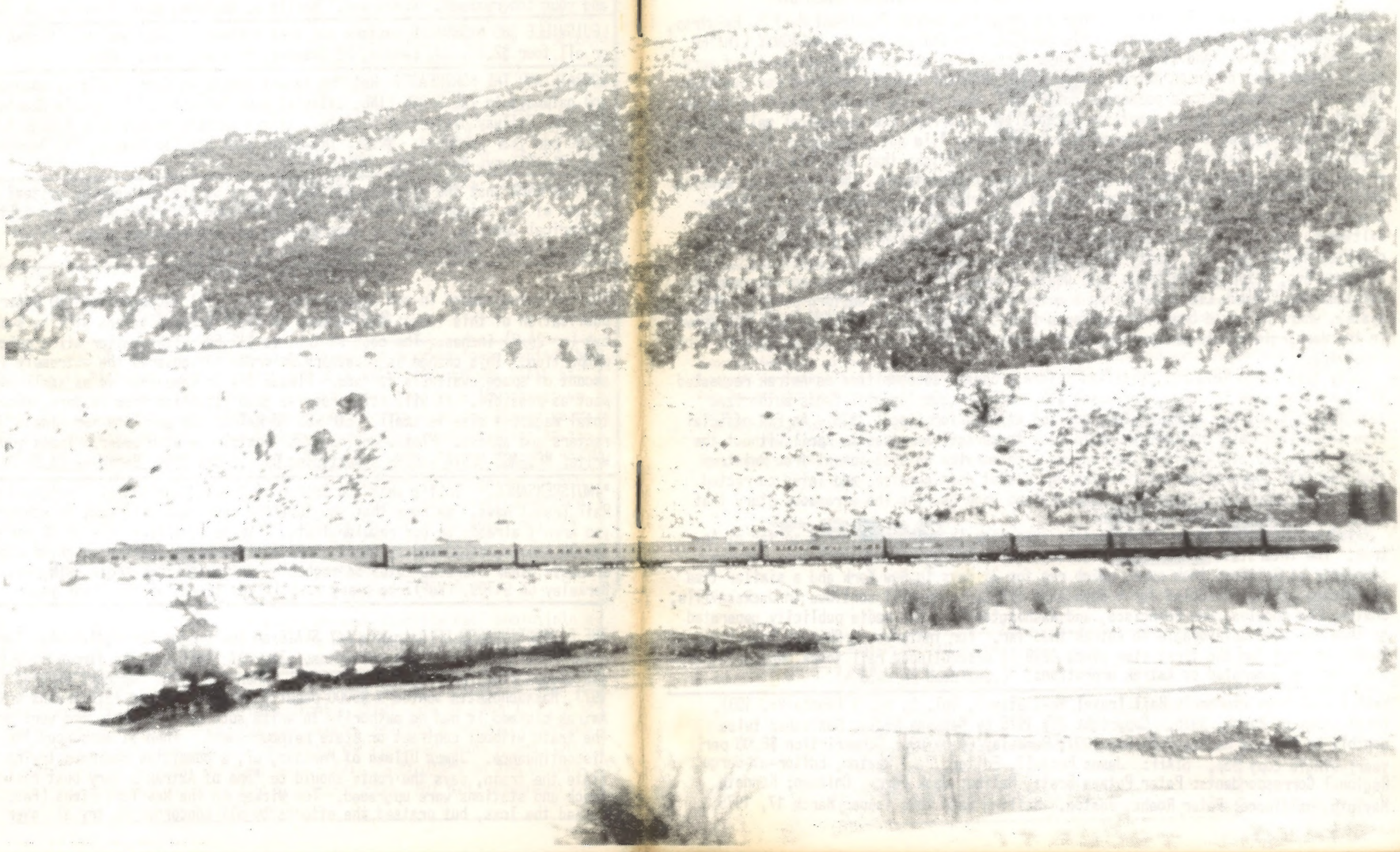

Rio Grande Zephyr

ON THE COVER

As another in our series depicting the beauties of rail travel, we present this two-page portrait of the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR westbound on Feb. 15, 1975 near Dotsero, Colorado. As the Rio Grande route brochure tells us, Dotsero (literally, dot-zero) is where the Eagle and Colorado Rivers join, and where the Royal Gorge route from Pueblo joins the D&RGW's Moffat Tunnel route. A survey of the Colorado River was made from here in 1885, and as the initial point, it appeared on the records as ".0" or dot zero. Just west of here is the 18-mile Glenwood Canyon, which the 4-dome train is about to enter. Photo from Kodacolor original by Paul Rayton.

In this issue we present our announced special feature on the RGZ, in 4 sections beginning on page 9. These are an evaluation of RGZ operations based on two RGZ rides last month, plus earlier experience, by Paul Rayton. Then Paul gives an editorial and recommendation for the train's future. This is followed by Glenn Lee's colorful account of a May, 1974 ride on the train, and finally we give our update on possible service changes now that the railroad is free to ask for discontinuance.

RAH RAH REISTRUP: THINGS START HUMMING AS AMTRAK'S NEW PRESIDENT TAKES OVER

Monday, March 3 was the first workday for incoming Amtrak President Paul H. Reistrup, and as noted last issue, he went to his new job from Chicago on the BROADWAY LIMITED the evening before. And if he didn't know already, he got an immediate taste of service problems that occur on Amtrak trains. His BROADWAY consist suffered car overheating problems, leading to a passenger rebellion. When it was learned that Reistrup was aboard, he was asked to do something personally to correct the mechanical malfunctions. Mr. Reistrup replied that he couldn't fix them since "I'm not a mechanic; I'm only the president." Mr. Reistrup seems to be up to his old tricks that made him such a crackerjack 10 years ago managing the B&O/C&O passenger department. On a Wednesday evening early in March Reistrup unannounced boarded a Florida train in Washington DC for a trip to Petersburg, VA some 140 miles distant. He then boarded a northbound run to Baltimore, and from there a southbound run back to Washington. Practically no one recognized him on the fast jaunt, giving him an opportunity to see it as it was. Some 10 years ago, a typical Reistrup trip would be west from Baltimore to an intermediate point on the CAPITOL LTD route, then a quick airline trip to a western point on the system, where he would board an eastbound train. These gyrations often kept the crews in the dark, giving him an opportunity to sample the exact service the passengers were receiving.

Early this month Reistrup testified before a Senate subcommittee as Amtrak requested $77.9 million more in funds, including $14.9 million supplemental funds authorized last fall but not yet appropriated, and $63 million for fiscal 1976. An FRA official also testifying said that Amtrak would have to curtail services in April without the funds. This was mistakenly picked up bya wire service as a statement from Reistrup that the rail corporation was threatening to shut down service, and later corrected. Amtrak said some people cancelled reservations upon hearing the erroneous story that Amtrak was threatening to shut down.

Reistrup's reputation as an aggressive executive is being maintained so far at Amtrak. The Interstate Commerce Commission began holding hearings on Amtrak service standards as Reistrup took over, which ran for 2½ days in New York and a similar time in Chicago (altho scheduled for 4 days each city). They will continue in Jacksonville, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington DC. The media publicity generated by them has been unfavorable to Amtrak thus far. For instance, a Chicago travel agency testified that for the first time since 1899 it discontinued rail tours because of dissatisfaction generated by Amtrak operations. (continued on page 4)

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The Trip of a Lifetime . . .

RAIL-TOUR ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES DURING BRITAIN'S HISTORIC 150th ANNIVERSARY OF RAILROADING!

May 29 — June 12, 1975

1825 1975

The 1974 "Britain-by-Rail" Tour brought rave notices from people who have travelled the world over. The 1975 tour, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of British railroading, will pack even more excitement.

After British Airways (BOAC) deposits you in London, you'll have a brief stay there to get your land legs and see some of the sights, then board the crack *Royal Highlander* for a sleeper trip to Inverness in Scotland's Loch Ness country.

You'll take the train through the spectacular Scottish Highlands to the lovely resort of Kyle of Lochalsh on the Irish Sea, then a steamer to Mallaig for rail connections to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

A high-speed electric will take you from Edinburgh to York, and from there to the great British Rail Experimental Center in Derby where you'll see the 150-mph APT (and you may be one of the first to ride the new Highspeed Train).

After a stop at Shrewsbury on the Welsh border, you'll travel to Plymouth on the English Channel in the "English Riviera" country. You'll visit Salisbury, site of mysterious Stonehenge. And that's just a small sampling. On free time, you can ride some of the 17 historic steam railways that will operate during the anniversary.

Rail and hotel accommodations are all first class. All breakfasts and some special events are included in the price. Air connections are from and to New York.

Despite rapidly escalating prices, we can offer you this once-in-a-lifetime trip for just $950. Accommodations are limited, so return the coupon today!

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RAH RAH REISTRUP (continued from page 2)

Amtrak found that ridership was dropping off "substantially" because of publicity generated by the ICC hearings. Mr. Reistrup sent a letter on March 14 to George M. Stafford, ICC chairman, protesting and questioning the validity of the hearings. Reistrup said in his letter that the hearings were generating destructive publicity. He said he'd ridden eleven Amtrak trains since becoming president, and had long experience in railroading, and that things weren't as bad as the ICC was painting them. The picture of Amtrak was being "distorted" in the media, and that this would do much to destroy Amtrak's efforts by focussing on the sensational. He noted that although Amtrak carried 19 million riders last year, less than 50 people had been heard at the hearings, and the hearings schedule had to be cut short because of few participants. Reistrup asked what was the reason for the hearings at this time. Hearings are supposed to be held in reference to proposed regulations or concerning enforcement of existing regulations, but Reistrup pointed out that neither of these two alternatives was relevant at this time. The sole purpose, he felt, of the hearings was to stir up negative publicity about Amtrak. He called upon Stafford to reconsider, to call off the hearings and instead to work together constructively with Amtrak to achieve better train service. He pointed out that he has been president for only 2 weeks, and that he is committed to giving America the finest rail service possible. (An Amtrak spokesman said that complaints to Amtrak average about one out of 2000 riders.)

THE "MOUNTAINEER" IS READY TO BEGIN RUNS

Amtrak's legislatively-mandated Norfolk-Cincinnati service, with thru cars to Chicago, will begin running eastbound on March 24, with an inaugural train from Tri-State Station, and a first westbound run on March 25. The new train will be called the MOUNTAINEER, and will leave Cincinnati eastbound at 11:32pm, joining up with the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY at Tri-State Station (Catlettesburg, KY, near Ashland) at 3:13am, and arriving in Roanoke at 11:55am and Norfolk at 6:10pm. Westbound it leaves Norfolk at 1:05pm, Roanoke at 6:55pm, and arrives at Tri-State Station at 3:35am where the whole train joins the RILEY consist for the trip to Chicago. It reaches Cincinnati at 7:15am. The Norfolk-Tri-State section will carry a lunch counter lounge, and the train obtains a complete diner when it joins the RILEY. The one-way coach fare Norfolk-Cincinnati is set at $31.50.

ROCK ISLAND ON VERGE OF BANKRUPTCY

The financially-troubled Rock Island Railroad, denied $30 million in federal USRA loans, as reported last issue, at a March 1 board meeting opted not to file in bankruptcy, but instead decided upon a 10% executive salary cut and asked its employees a take a like reduction to try to keep the road solvent. Now the railroad finds itself unable to meet cash requirements due on March 17, including $6 million in payroll, and the board of directors is to meet again March 15 to discuss whether to declare bankruptcy or shut down operations. The USRA on March 14 was to again consider its request for funds, but the expectation as we go to press was that it would again be rejected. The ICC, meanwhile, has decided to support a plan for taking over the line and eventually tearing most of it up. It would be run, assuming the RI decides to close down, by other railroads designated by law by the ICC, for a maximum of 8 months. On March 13 the Chicago Regional Transportation Authority granted the road an emergency $619,500 to keep commuter trains running thru the end of March. The commuter operations would be taken over by public agencies if the road cannot continue operations as a separate private entity.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"On Wednesday, the USRA turned down the railroad's applications, including a $9.1 million loan it tentatively had grated February 4 and a $30 million loan as a stopgap measure."

--San Francisco Chronicle, March 1

(And then they tentatively put the whole thing in the paper shredder.)

Inside Amtrak Headquarters

PART FOUR

BY PETER PUTNAM BRETZ

Prepared for another interview wiht key Amtrak personnel, I sat in Jim Bryant's office on the 8th floor. The corporation looked pretty good to me this day because they had been right on top of a derailment out in Minnesota. The EMPIRE BUILDER had left the tracks near St. Paul, and Jim Bryant had all the details. Well, at least NHPC knows what is happening, to a certain extent.

I found my by now familiar way around the corridors and to the elevators. Various officials and office people floated around. "Hello, Pete." "Hi, Mr. Bretz." Ed Edel happened to be in the same elevator. 'How are the interviews going?' he asked. Assured that I was getting much worthwhile info, he stressed again his full cooperation. I thanked him and stepped off at 5th floor, the Operations Level. My appointment was with Phil Held, chief at reservations.

Passing by the nerve center, I found Mr. Held's office and spent a profitable hour learning about no-shows, waiting lists, etc. Mr. Held rose from his desk and we walked down a hallway and into a room with a dozen or so computer consoles. He introduced me to Mr. Ron Scolaro, the General Supervisor of Reservations Control.

'Show Mr. Bretz here the operations of the computer, would you please?'

Mr. Scolaro sat at a console with me beside him. He began his briefing.

* * *

ATK: Basically, most of the interactions are on a question basis--so when a call comes in, mainly the passenger wants to know what train goes between one point and another point, what fare he will pay, and any other pertinent information. The machine is designed specifically to give us information

Let's assume that you call up soliciting information to go to Florida, for example, on January 5. 'Where would you like to go, sir?' 'I'd like to go from Washington to West Palm Beach.'

The agent would interrogate the system, asking what train goes from Washington (everything is coded) ...WAS, the code for Washington--to West Palm Beach (WPB)...on Jan. 5; he tells the machine and the machine will tell him what trains operate. As you read it, 81-91, it tells the type of train. (You have three types of trains: X means a Metroliner, W for a conventional long haul train, and eventually we'll have one for the Turbo) This says train 81-91 departs Washington at 2:45pm, arrives West Palm Beach at 12:35pm one day later. One thru 7 means it operates daily. And this means specific service cars: S means it has coach capability, R for roomette, B for bedroom.

RTN: What does MJQW mean?

ATK: Let me get my book... these are called Train Service Codes. M stands for food service, J for tavern-lounge serviceQ means there's entertainment on the train, W means it has baggage service. Now of course an agent does thus day in and day out and becomes so familiar with these codes that he can just rattle them off. D stands for drawing room, L for slumbercoach.

So, for example, as I'm talking to you I say 'Sir, what time would you like to depart Washington? You have a train leaving at 2:45, one at 5:00 o'clock, and a train at 7:10.' Now, note here these train numbers. They leave at the same time because this is a separate car; it has to be handled independently.

RTN: How do you mean?

ATK: 81-91...the SILVER STAR goes between New York and St. Pete and New York and Miami. From a system logic standpoint it's the exact same train until it gets down to Orlando where it splits. When it splits it becomes train 91. When it goes to Miami it's train 81. From a system standpoint it cannot recognize 81 going to two different places, so we have to come up with a pseudo train number--81 feeding 91 going to that destination, 91 going in the other direction.

And 61-91 is a car that originates in Montreal on train 61, connecting at a certain point going south into Florida. That's why these 4-digit numbers do arise. There are about ten of those type train numbers.

Now let's assume that our passenger wants to know what the fare is. The system tells him that the coach one-way fare is $53.75 (old fares), slumbercoach is $14.75. This figure here is the accommodation charge. So if the passenger is going first class, he pays $76.75 plus the roomette rate, which is $19.75.

RTN: A first class passenger would have to pay $76.75 plus $33 if he went in a bedroom singly.

ATK: There are some exceptions to the rule where we have one passenger in a bedroom who pays 1½ times the going rate and that would have to be computed into..

RTN: How would a computer operator know that by looking at that?

ATK: This is pure and idealistic right now. It is being sophisticated to the point where it would give you half fares. It has to be computed independently by the clerk.

(The reset button is touched.)

ATK: Now the person says, "Great, I'd like to take the 89 (the MIAMIAN) from Washington to West Palm Beach. What kind of accommodations should I have?" Let's take sleeping accommodations...

RTN: You've pressed re-set and nothing has changed on the screen...

ATK: I'm going to ask the system what space is available on this train; or "WS", train 89 from Washington to West Palm Beach on 1-5-75, and we'll say he wants a bedroom. I get a new line and press my "B" for bedroom. Now, when it's done, it's telling me that on this train I have at least a minimum of 6 bedrooms open. There could be 26 available, but the system only shows 6 at a time.

RTN: Apparently this is an 11-double bedroom car.

ATK: Exactly. This gives you the car line number. This, in brackets, is a diagram number.

RTN: What does the 25 mean?

ATK: The 25 means an 11 double bedroom car. 16 would be a 10 and 6, diagram 2 is a 6-6 and 4. Each particular car type has a diagram reference number. It corresponds exactly to planned consists of that train as published by the Operations Department, which means, as far as we're concerned, the published consist shows 89-35 is supposed to be an 11-bedroom. If, on day of departure, because of substitutions, bad-order, or whatever, this could change. But then another process comes into effect where we would have to do passenger re-accommodations. Now, they have bedrooms available, and the passenger wants 2 bedrooms.

RTN: Okay, but now it's up to the agent to decide whether he gets D and E, or E and F.

ATK: Yes, unless the customer says "I'd like to have a middle bedroom like bedroom E." Well, I can give you bedroom E. Then he would say "reserve space" and it's the fifth accommodation shown, and the system would automatically take that accommodation out of inventory. Right now, anybody who did a "what space" would never see bedroom E because it's hung up in my terminal. It's out of inventory; nobody can touch this except me.

RTN: Alright, now let's start over again.

ATK: Right now, if you wanted to see if you had anything in the terminal memory, off the shelf as such, you would tell the machine to reserve space; if it clears it up it means there's nothing in my memory. Now if I wanted to go back and reserve space--remember the train date that I had before? Again it re-displays... take it off the shelf; I'll take 2 bedrooms off, the first two I and H. Now the man says, "Yes, I want the two bedrooms." Fine. Now let's get to the point where we make the reservation record up. Now we're telling the system "create a P and R"--a passenger name record. We'll use Jones, J. Can I have your home number?

RTN: You punched an H.

ATK: For home phone; and your business phone... and a space to make it easier on the eyes. Then there's what they call a contact field.. Who make the reservation? The passenger? That would be P. "A" would be a travel agency, R would be a remote Amtrak agency.

Now we'll assign what we call a hold number which means at what point in time we feel this man should pick up his tickets. In this case, this is Dec. 5, a month before departure. He should pick up his tickets at least 10 days before departure, so I will assign a hold number of 12-15.

Right now the system does one of several things: when I press that "send" button, the system computes fares on everything except bedrooms and drawing rooms. It's being programmed so all you have to do is send it and the system would automatically give you the correct fare based on a one-way full fare.

Right now it doesn't do that. So I would have to independently input the fare. Let's just make up a fare level. We have an interaction which is called "adjust the record." I'm going to adjust the record to include... in this case it would go "KF."

RTN: FPU/KF...

ATK: Right, "A1" meaning this accommodation. That's full fare I want him to pay.. KFA2.. now I'm saying "system, compute for me." Hope it does.

RTN: We've got PR, the passenger 115289.

ATK: We've got these new K numbers. Now, let's suppose the man's going to pick up his tickets right now. Let's just clear the scope... What happens is that Mr. Jones is happy with his reservation one-way. He has a P and R in there; now he's going to pick up his tickets in a week. He goes down to Washington Union Terminal and says, "I have a reservation on Train 89 for Jan. 5." Automatically the person would go in and interrogate the system and ask, "What reservation for a Mr. Jones on this train, on this date. And the system would retrieve it. What you don't see is that there were like four Joneses on there. It would retrieve all the Joneses on the list.

RTN: I see; all the J. Joneses...

ATK: In this case, this is probably the only Jones on this train, so the computer just spelled it out. But I'll give you an example of what it would look like. Let's make up a name... uh, "Mr. Stook" - on train 83 of 12-20-74.

RTN: See what happens...

ATK: What the system does, it gave me that man named "Stout" but only because it reads: "Are there S's? Yes; are there ST's? Are there STO's?" And then finally it brings it down to a number and says "Hey, this is the one it is." If we couldn't find Mr. Stook and you wanted to go even further, we'd interrogate it deeply. Then it would look at <u>all</u> the S's on this train. And there may be a considerable number of S's on this particular train. This is the list.

RTN: Stout, Stuart, Stein...

ATK: And it also supplies the phone number. Say I wanted to look at number 6... I say give me #6 and it tells me..

RTN: Mr. Shone, with his phone number.

ATK: It shows it empty.

RTN: What does this 11-8-74 mean?

ATK: That was the hold limit. This is an example of a cancelled PN because if you see nothing alive on your screen and it's empty, it means whatever space he had no longer exists.

RTN: It says "enter WP."

ATK: There are two things that we'd have to do. WP is an informational field. Let's see what it says. WP says "tickets not picked up on the 9th after two hold limits, change of sale, space was cancelled, expired hold limit on 10-18" and it tells exactly what happened. If he showed up and said "I had a reservation," then the agent says "Well, let me check the record," and looks at the WP and it gives a complete chronological "what happened."

RTN: How come it showed this guy still on the train?

ATK: No, I asked it to show me all the S's. All the ones that <u>ever</u> had a reservation on it. It'll show blank if a certain reservation is cancelled.

If I wanted to see what he was holding, I'd say "what history." Now it will tell me <u>all</u> the good things he had. He originally had train 83 (New York-Hollywood) and he was holding 2 slumbercoaches, and coming back out of Hollywood he was also holding 2 slumbercoaches. This tells me that on Aug. 12 at 4:24pm, agent 3203 created that record. Then, on Nov. 9 agent 1335 at this hour cancels. Now I can go back, if there was a question, to that agent to find out what happened.

RTN: How long is this kept in the computer?

ATK: It's retained until the last itinerary expires 24 hours, which means on Jan. 5, and then it falls out and it's purged and re-used again.

That number 90566 is a "record address." Each P and R has a record number. After his last leg of space is expired and used, we take his record and put it on microfilm so we can have access to it, on permanent record for a year. This is for our safety. Six months from now the passenger may sue Amtrak or complain about something. We want to have his record available a reasonable amount of time after the last date of travel.

(continued on page 18)

Mixed Train of Thoughts

MORE DETAILS ON the derailment of the SILVER STAR reported last issue: the northbd train, carrying 442 passengers in 18 cars, was sideswiped by a southbound freight at Woodbridge, VA Feb. 21, while traveling at 70mph. Both engines and 7 cars of the Amtrak train derailed, and 23 persons were injured, only two still hospitalized by the next day. A coal car broke loose from the freight and struck the engines, then next hit the lounge car of the train. Seven cars of 110-car freight derailed. The Amtrak engines were dexcribed as severely damaged. Passengers were bused on to Washington to be placed on other trains..... THE HISTORIC DURAND depot in Michigan is the subject of a concerted effort by the Michigan Ass'n of RR Psgrs at saving the structure. Grand Trunk would like to tear down the building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, reports the Wolverine Mainliner, but Amtrak has leased the station until May 31 while plans are worked out for its preservation..... THINGS THAT SOMEHOW got omitted from earlier issues department: on Jan. 21 a New York State Supreme Court justice ruled that the designation of Grand Central Terminal as a landmark is invalid, and Penn Central is free to tear down the historic structure, much to the grievance of New Yorkers..... DOWN IN MEXICO a production line is being set up in Ciudad Sahagun to build 200 new railroad passenger cars in conjunction with Canadian industry. The cars are destined for NdeM, to upgrade its trains. A rumor circulating south of the border is that NdeM will change the schedule of its AZTEC EAGLE, speeding it up and improving equipment, all of which should help Amtrak's INTER-AMERICAN runs. When Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip visited Mexico in late Feburary, they rode a special train that included railroad office cars.....

* * *

ALL SIX TURBOLINERS of the latest shipment from France are now in Chicago, and Amtrak expects to announce soon the routes on which they will be used. And the Iranian State Railways, reports Railway Age, is ordering 4 similar trains from France, and has an option on 22 others..... AMTRAK'S BILEVEL CARS will be discussed again at the next Amtrak board meeting on March 26..... AMTRAK HAS ISSUED the following new schedules dated Feb. 23, for the changeover to Daylgiht Savings Time: Midwest; Chicago-California; Chicago-Seattle-New York-Buffalo-Detroit; Washington/Newport News-Chicago; Chicago-New Orleans & St. Louis-Laredo; East-Midwest; Washington-Montreal; Northeast; NY-Washington-Sunset Route; and West Coast. Arizona remains on Standard Time, which is the same as Pacific Daylight Time. The state of Michigan remains on Standard Time, but the schedule of the BLUE WATER has been shortened, making for better arrival and departure times in Port Huron. As mentioned earlier, the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL cannot connect with the COAST STARLIGHTsouthbound because Canada is still on Standard Time, so Amtrak arranges a bus connection for passengers wishing to travel through..... A CORRECTION IN the consist of the SOUTHWEST LIMITED given in our last issue, courtesy of Gary Zeitler: Car 2711 "Pine Beach" was not the thru NY-LA sleeper. The sleeper was annulled at Kansas City due to the fact that the car destined to go thru did not arrive on THE NATIONAL LIMITED until 8:53am on Feb. 25. The thru sleeper would have been 2624, "Pacific Patrol." The car remained in Kansas City and was sent back out on the NATIONAL LTD about 3 hours later.....

* * *

YOUR EDITOR RODE the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR on an eastward trip late in February and concurs with Paul Rayton's comments about the train. The diner was indeed fine and the crews pleasant and efficient. Our only real, minor, criticism was in the condition ofthe track leaving Salt Lake City. The diner, "Silver Banquet," rode very badly on this track, creating unpleasant vibrations and making food handling difficult. It is suspected that the car could stand shopping. The biggest crowd on the train was east of Glenwood Springs, where a mass of people descended upon the domes. Ironically a highway engineer rode in a dome while he surveyed the highway across the river with an eye to widening it, further destroying the beauty of the canyon.

(continued on page 17)

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE Rio Grande Zephyr

SECTION ONE BY PAUL RAYTON

It had been slightly less than two years since we last found ourselves, in the gray dawning hours, at Denver Union Station preparing to board the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. My wife the pessimist kept assuring me that it would not be as nice as last time since everyone knows railroads don't spend any more than they absolutely have to on passenger service. The service surely had deteriorated since our previous rendezvous. Or had it?

As we approached the door of our assigned coach, no. 32, the porter came forward and volunteered to help carry our luggage on board. An auspicious beginning.

Prior to departure, I made a quick check of the equipment for the day: matched set of F engines up front, steam car, the combine, two dome coaches, the dining car, and of course the dome-sleeper-observation "Silver Sky." There was a moderate crowd aboard, considering that it was a Thursday (Feb. 13)--about 70 out of Denver, with about half of those to be detraining at Glenwood Springs, and at least half of that remainder to be departing at Grand Junction. We were heading "all the way," destination Salt Lake City, subsequently to return as far as Glenwood Springs.

As soon as the train got into motion (promptly at 7am), we headed toward the dining car for breakfast. The steward and waiters nearly bowled us over with their effusive "Good morning!" and "How about some breakfast?" A capital idea, that, and we sat down to an excellent breakfast of French Toast ("Rio Grande Special") with the extra pleasure of being in a smoothly running dining car and that approaching Rocky Mountains ascent.

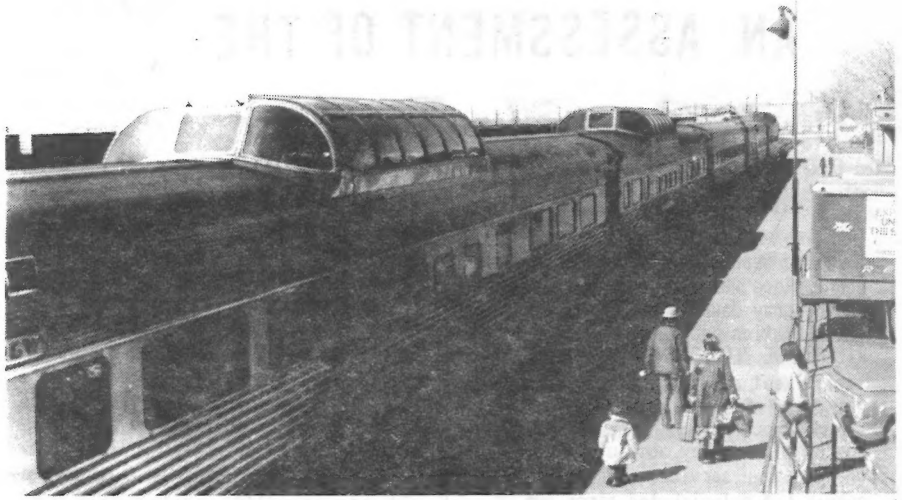
Enough has been written about the scenery of this route to make it unnecessary to describe further here. Those still unfamiliar with the route will find aboard the train a small route guide furnished by the D&RGW. I hadn't seen that in 1973.

Our trip proceeded without major incident. The operating crews knew what was expected of them, and did it. All the meals were flawlessly (and generously) served. We kept to schedule altho one red block near Granby, courtesy of a rock that fell and tripped a slide warning wire, set us temporarily a few minutes behind.

After leaving Helper (on time) we did experience a dramatic event that put the trip out of the ordinary. The brakeman was suddenly seized by angina pectoris pains. After hurried radio messages to the dispatcher, we stopped at an isolated grade crossing at the top of Soldier Summit while an ambulance rushed up from Helper. The skies were dark and threatening of snow, and night was rapidly supplanting daylight. Thank God it didn't start snowing! Eventually the ambulance arrived and the stricken brakeman was taken off. He was still moving more or less under his own power, so happily the incident wasn't fatal.

We arrived in Salt Lake City a little late, but this was excusable under the circumstances. It certainly wasn't the malevolence of upper management or the dispatcher. In fact, we had had excellent dispatching all during the trip. It was obvious time and again when we would pass either opposing or same-direction freights, all dutifully waiting in the sidings for our passing. This is one heavily-traveled single-track railroad, and the dispatching was as flawless and professional as one could find.

In the dining car, all meals are served on linen tablecloths, many still showing the woven-in CALIFORNIA



The eastbound RGZ pauses at Grand Junction on a late February day. Cars visible (l.-r.): "Silver Bronco," "Silver Pony," "Silver Pine," "Silver Banquet," and "Silver Sky." Photo by Message Media.

ZEPHYR name, and the prices for meals are certainly not exorbitant. Compared with my 1973 trip, prices were higher by 7-15%, which I don't call bad for a 2-year interval, especially considering national inflation rates. In 1973 I found the prices about 10% higher than comparable fare on Amtrak trains. That differential doesn't hold now since Amtrak is revising its menus and pricings. Amtrak's old menus were issued in 1973 and, by today's standards, showed very low prices. The best comparison to make is with the Jan.'75 Amtrak menus now in use (both dining cars) on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED. The French Toast breakfast on the Rio Grande costs $2.65. The comparable serving on Amtrak is now $3.05. Or how about Pan Fried Corned Beef Hash with Poached Egg? $2.80 vs. Amtrak's $3.10. (In fairness, some items were priced the same, and some Amtrak food was less expensive.)

Meal price isn't the only comparator. On the Rio Grande you are still served coffee in a silver pot, and your eating utensils are silver plate, not stainless stell trinkets. The morning maple syrup is brought to you in a silver syrup server. Amtrak serves Kraft "syrup" in individual plastic box creations that invariably deposit more on the fingers than on the intended meal.

The D&RGW dinner salad is still full of bits of several fresh garden vegetables, and the basket of assorted crackers is present all day except for breakfast. For the hearty eater, the D&RGW Breakfast Steak ($3.75) is absolutely superb--a tender, tasty preparation that I recommend without hesitation. The only way one can eat both the French Toast and the Breakfast Steak is to ride the RGZ twice. Which, come to think of it, isn't a bad idea.

And finally the wines. The RGZ dining car still carries no less than four types of red wine and two whites. On Amtrak one is lucky to have the following choice: "red" or "white."

Not everything was ducky, I'll admit. I did form a rather subjective opinion that the physical maintenance of the equipment wasn't quite as good as it used to be. There were more windows with inter-pane condensation. The water cooler in "Silver Sky" dispensed slightly orange (and therefore undrunk) water, and in another car the water cooler, altho furnishing clean water, ran its compressor all the time. Not a big problem, but if the maintenance was truly top notch, that cooler would have cycled itself properly. I utilize these small points as indicators of the overall level of care expended on the train as a whole.

The D&RGW-done redecoration of some of the interiors is still adequate, altho I saw a few frayed edges.

I am also puzzled by the continued non-acceptance of credit cards for purchases by the railroad. We would have booked the drawing room for our trip if we could have charged the fare. We couldn't, so we paid the much lower coach fare. It's D&RGW's loss. I had casually assumed that cards were now acceptable and was quite mistaken. Watching the laborious process by which the Denver ticket agent computed our fares to Salt Lake--by hand--I felt just the slightest twinge of embarrassment that they didn't have more up-to-date methods. Here, the "good old way" of doing things wasn't for the better.

The problem of moisture condensation between window panes is my biggest gripe. It is only logical, I suppose, since the equipment is two years older. But I couldn't help but wish that some wealthy soul would come along and make a grant to the railroad ("in the public interest") of, say, $10,000 to go thru all the cars (D&RGW owns 10 Zephyr-type passenger cars) and reseal all leaky panes! The scenery on the route demands nothing less! But lexan window haters, note: none of that on the D&RGW. A very big plus.

I would grade the roadbed about a B-. It is a bit rough between Provo and Salt Lake, where the train rolls along at 70mph-plus. Otherwise restricted speeds over hills and around curves minimize bumps.

I would have a difficult time answering the question "What is the best train ride in the country today?" If it had more scenery and more domes (and carpeting), I'd go for the SOUTHERN CRESCENT. The RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR has the scenery and the domes--and the food. But the window problem bothers me. And Amtrak? Well, the equipment and services are so erratic that I can't recommend anything there without dozens of reservations and "ifs." In the final analysis, I come back to the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR as my recommendation for the ultimate train ride in the States today.

The method of riding the train is refreshingly simple: you just get on, settle back assured that your train will be well run by a truly competent organization, and enjoy. Enjoy the scenery, enjoy the multiplicity of dome views, enjoy the food. Especially the food! Go to the dining car as often as you can eat! Have a drink (not served in plastic cups) and sit near a window and watch the rushing waters of rivers and streams break over ice and stone. Look for ducks, deer, or maybe antelopes or an eagle. Forget about railfanning and enjoy the trip. This is the place to do it.

SECTION TWO: AN EDITORIAL by Paul Rayton

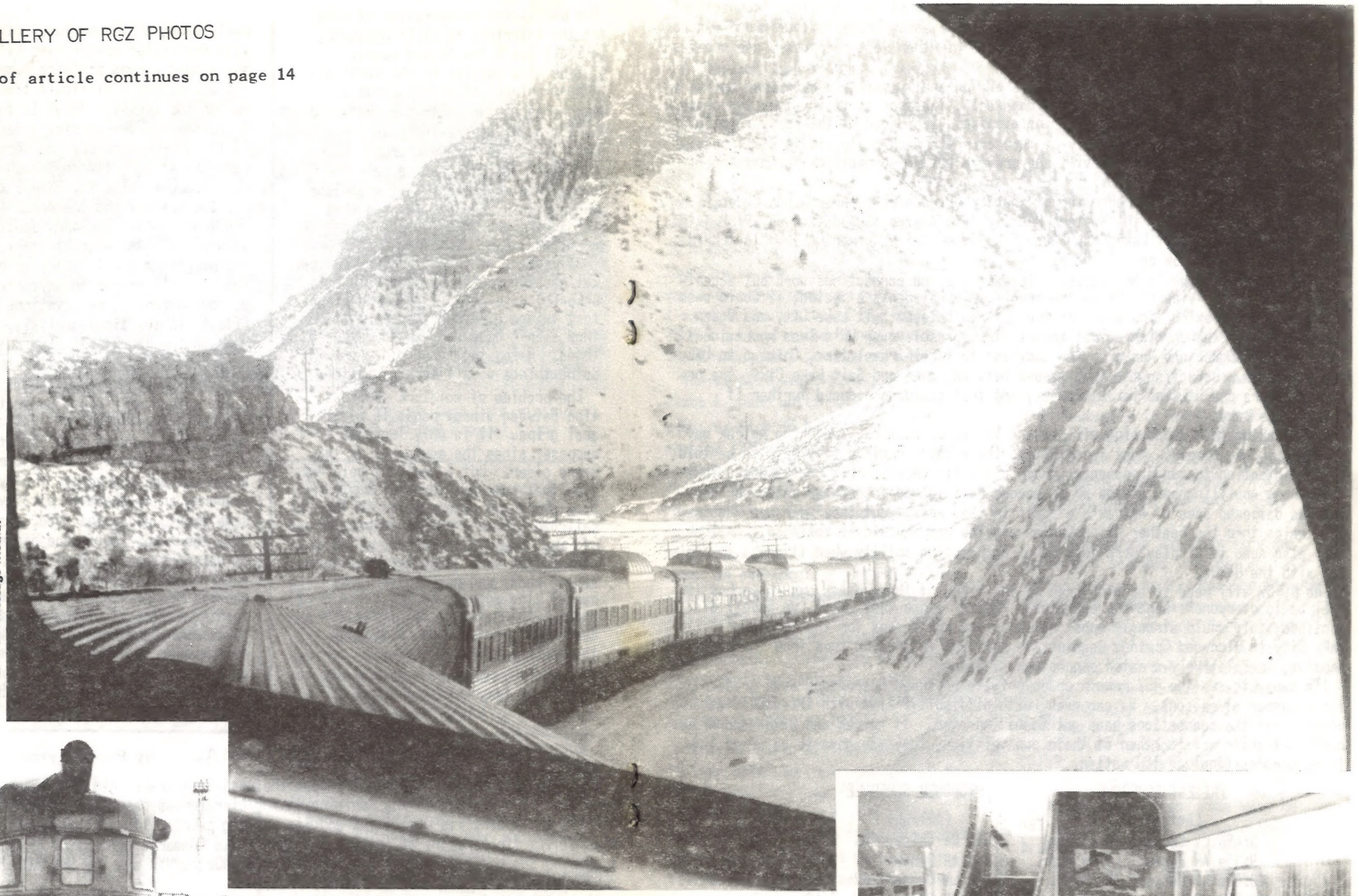
While the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR rolls down the uncertain track into its future, it is surprising that nobody in the decision-making hierarchies has acted to more fully utilize the train, its capacities and its selling points. In a little-noted section of its first report on Amtrak, the Interstate Commerce Commission originally suggested the radical idea of having the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR and the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR connect at both ends of the RGZ route.

It is true that ridership of the RGZ has increased substantially since the 1970 inception of the present tri-weekly service, but the fact remains that the route potential is very badly ignored, whether thru lack of concern or knowledge. In the old days of the predecessor CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, considerable patronage derived from the many residents of the Midwest heading for the Colorado mountains (especially the Aspen area) to ski. That is now impossible to do without a mode change or an overnight stay in Denver. Both are unacceptable barriers when autos and air carriers provide direct or thru service.

Equally important, many rail tour groups are forced to bypass this route, the route which unquestionably is the most scenic rail mileage in the country and very probably in all of North America. Tour groups that do elect to travel the route can only do

A GALLERY OF RGZ PHOTOS

Text of article continues on page 14



Photos from Message Media.

In late February a four-dome RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR threaded its way eastward through the snow-covered mountains of Utah. Consist of above train: 3 F units (ABB arrangement), heater car, 1230 baggage-coach combine, "Silver Mustang" dome, "Silver Bronco" dome, "Silver Pony" dome, "Silver Pine" coach, "Silver Banquet" diner, "Silver Sky" dome observation lounge.
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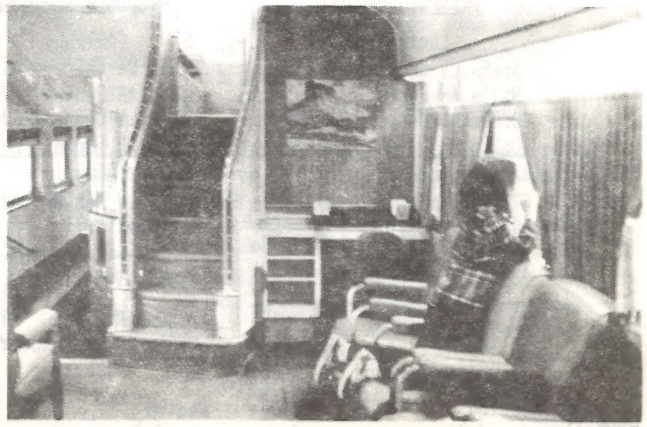

"Silver Sky" (left photo) sports a small RGZ drumhead on the rear. Interior of car is at right, showing small writing desk complete with ICC complaint forms. Stairs to dome are at left of desk.

so between Denver and some intermediate point, because of the atrocious "connection" at Salt Lake City/Ogden. This reduces passenger revenue, prevents tour group-owned equipment from making thru passage on the route (further lost revenues), and creates a deadhead equipment problem for D&RGW.

The "connection" between the RGZ and the SFZ presently maintained between Salt Lake City and Ogden is a connection in name only, inasmuch as it involves two changes of mode, one of them at a totally inconvenient (3am) hour of the early morning. Without seeking the ultimate luxury of thru cars via each route, it is still possible both to improve Amtrak's service and provide better connections for passengers in both Denver and Salt Lake City.

Such a plan involves the rerouting of the SFZ between Elko, Nevada and Ogden, shifting to the tracks of the Western Pacific from Alazon, Nevada, where WP/SP joint trackage splits, to Salt Lake City (yes, the route of the former CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR) and via the UP or D&RGW on into Ogden.

Schedule juggling would be necessary to make all the connections work out acceptably. However, in view of the vast connection improvements effected, it would seem worthwhile. The extra time added to the SFZ run between Salt Lake City and Ogden compensates for the shorter actual travel time possible over UP's less mountainous route between Ogden and Denver. The addition to total travel time, Chicago to Oakland, is 1:45. Deducting the 1:15 needed between Ogden and Salt Lake City, the only real extra pad of time is 30 minutes, and that could be reduced further if deemed necessary.

Establishing this scheduling will take a lot of persuasion, something Amtrak may not have in big supply. Most importantly, the Western Pacific will have to be told of the intention to run a passenger train along its tracks. (It is suspected that a vigorous unwillingness of the WP to become re-involved in regular passenger service has dampened some of Amtrak's efforts in this area. But they've run a number of SFZ trains thru the Feather River Canyon and the company didn't collapse.) Amtrak will also need to display more intramural cooperation ability when it comes to dealing with the D&RGW.

The D&RGW will need to be convinced of the value of these plans and shown how it will be to everyone's benefit, especially theirs: since they can't (we hope!) discontinue, this would strongly boost revenues and cut losses for the "problem" Salt Lake City to Glenwood Springs segment, in addition to freeing them from their expensive, legislatively-created connection to Ogden.

I'm happy to see the RGZ remain under private railroad operation, even prefer it, for a number of reasons. We can even (with difficulty) live with tri-weekly scheduling. But the connections have got to be improved. If Amtrak and D&RGW and WP can't get their act together of their own volition, they may have to be urged into it by Congressional or ICC action.

PRESENT SCHEDULE				PROPOSED SCHEDULE			
(Amtrak)				(Amtrak)			
3:45p	LV Chicago	AR	11:55a	1:00p	LV Chicago	AR	2:55p
9:15a	AR Denver	LV	4:45p	6:30a	AR Denver	LV	7:45p
10:00a	LV Denver	AR	4:00p	7:00a	LV Denver	AR	7:00p
10:20p	AR Ogden	LV	3:45a	7:20p	AR Ogden	LV	6:40a
(D&RGW)				(D&RGW)			
7:00a	LV Denver	AR	9:00p	7:00a	LV Denver	AR	7:00p
9:00p	AR Salt Lake	LV	7:00a	9:00p	AR Salt Lake	LV	5:00a
10:00p	AR Ogden (bus)	LV	6:00a	9:15p	LV Salt Lake	AR	4:45a
10:45p	LV Ogden	AR	3:15a	12:30a	AR Elko	AR	11:20p
1:30a	AR Elko	AR	9:37p	2:05p	AR Oakland	LV	11:15a
3:05p	AR Oakland	LV	9:20a				
	Westbd read down		Eastbd read up		Westbd read down		Eastbd read up

SECTION THREE: SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES BY GLENN LEE

A pleasant week in May was coming to an end in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. During my stay the pussy-willow grey of the aspens above Glen-wood had given way to the lime-green buds of spring. The days were warm and clear, punctuated by a few thunder-storms at dusk. The Denver Hotel at Glenwood is about the most pleasurable of any I know, and thus it was with reluctance and regret that I watched the westbound RIO GRANDE ZEPHER pull into the Pagoda-esque Rio Grande depot to take me away.

The consist was vintage, and include F power units 5771, 5762 and 5763; ex-Alco PB heater car 252; combine 1230; ex-CZ coaches "Silver Mustang" and "Silver Pony"; diner "Silver Banquet" and dome-obse-lounge "Silver Sky". RGZ had been on time from Denver, but there had been considerable business for Glenwood, an ever-popular resort destination. There had been about 110 passengers on at Denver; with some 65 (or so) bound for points west of Grand Junction. The trip to Ogden was a study in contrasts, some of them symmetric, with a similar trip made in the fall of 1973.

ICC's ex parte #277 was in evidence. "Silver Colt" had been designated the "No Smoking" car and "Mustang" ahead was the smoker. Complaint notices were stuffed into the timetable racks aboard the cars, and I am hoping they will be used, as the mechanical performance of the cars was slipping. Most noticeable was the warmth aboard. This increased during the afternoon as the temperature rose as we moved west. The coaches remeained moderately cooled, but as the day wore on, "Silver Mustang" grew warm, and although it was as heavily loaded as "Pony", "Mustang's" dome emptied. The diner ran a little warmer, and "Silver Sky" was without cooling, and was quite warm when we got to Grand Junction, where the spring temperature had risen to 92. Nevertheless, the passengers were having a good time.

A few miles west of Glenwood Springs RGZ runs over ex-Colorado Midland right-of-way, abandoned during World War I and brought back to use by a highway project on the north bank of the Colorado which required use of Rio Grande's own right-of-way. At Chacra, RGZ crosses back on to Rio Grande alignment; and a few miles to the west, at Newcastle, can be seen the piers of the Midland's bridge, which marked the western-most extent of Midland's own track. From Newcastle to Grand Junction, it was trackage rights for the Midland, which died partially because it had been standard gauge in narrow-gauge terrain too much of the time.

The dining car was busy serving lunch as I boarded, six of the 12 tables working hard. Passing through the car en route to the obse I heard the steward say; "sit toward the rear, it's a little cooler there," and I felt that only the rear a.c. unit in "Silver Banquet" was working. The only cool item in "Silver Sky" was a can of coke, and I took it and fled to my seat in "Silver Colt", truly regretting that "Silver Sky" had become such an oven. By coincidence, a friend rode west on RGZ two days later, and said the brakman told him "Silver Sky" runs hot on all trips these days!

A few moments later Rio Grande committed its first bit of lawbreaking for the day, and RGZ went into Tunnel siding at 1:51 pm for an eastbound freight led by units 5336-3089-3025. Four minutes later we were back on the main and after some close looks at a high and rushing Colorado River in Palisade Canyon, we were into Grand Junction on time at 2:25pm.

As with last fall, the ZEPHYR pulled past the depot to the fuel racks two blocks west; but only one below of unhappiness could be heard: a woman who moaned "why don't they let us out at the depot first?"

Departure from Grand Junction was on time, and as the sun grew brighter and the day warmer, there was a gen-eral retreat to the coach seats, and many of the passengers generally ignored Ruby Canyon, one of the prettiest parts of the trip west of the Front Range.

As we moved up the grade west from Westwater, there was little or no interest in the Canyonlands to the south. The high sun and a spring haze had conspired to keep the great spires and arches well hidden from view.

The desert to me is very beautiful, but others don'tthink so. The friend two days behind me on RGZ said he found it boring, but agreed that might be due to the fact he didn't know much about the desert. Actually, this is the hauntingly grand land of Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire", one of the finest recent books on the desert, and an inexpensive paperback which I very much recommend. Abbey had left his job as a college instructor to become a ranger at Arches National Monument (now Park) and in the book he comes and goes from tours of duty via the Rio Grande passenger service to Thompson, Utah. In one exciting chapter he climbs to the summit of Tukuhnikivats (visible from RGZ and Indian for "Where the Sun Lingers") and I have experienced a delicious feeling of sympathetic thrill just going past Tukuhnikivats on RGZ know-ing what it has meant to others with eyes for beauty and adventure.

"Head into the siding at Green River to pick up passengers" blared the train radio; and as at Glenwood, where passengers are loaded from the siding, we slowed, and then stopped for a mother and two small boys. It is still hot, but relief is on the way. Freights in both directions are tak-ing the sidings for us, and we are rolling well around the Sphinx. Soon high clouds reduce the desert glare.

A strong cold front is moving in, and soon the train's cars are cooling off.

The sun is setting, as we stop briefly at Price's dark red brick depot, and a few minutes later are west from Helper six minutes late. Railroading here really grows busy. At 6:03pm, a work train backing down the eastbound main. At 6:12 and 6;17pm long eastbound freights powered each by four units. At 6:21pm, two helper units braking down the hill. At 6:32pm, RGZ overtakes a coal train slowly working up to Soldier Summit, two units forward, three helping in the middle. At 6:40pm, bumps as RGZ's brake test is made, and we're off down the western slope's big S curves.

Here I finally get a chance to have dinner. After a few trips to the dining car with no luck, the extremely courteous and efficient steward walked forward to the dome to personally tell me he had a win-dow seat, for which I had waited. I was quite hungry, and plunged into a delicious steak, the only one on my trip, and well worth it. Terrific food.

Three white Alcos of the Utah Coal Route worked wast against us on the upper rung of the S curve, and moments later, on the middle runs we saw them way above us, looking like the smallest gauge of model trains, working slowly to the summit with a long string of empty hoppers. Diner could not have been more pleasant, taking trains over good food and dropping down Spanish Fork canyon to Provo. It was still light, and the great valley beyond the Wasatch looked green and lush as we emerged from the mountains. Provo was almost on time, our departure two minutes down.

Arrival at Salt Lake was 8:48pm, some 12 minutes early on the scheduled 9pm arrival. The train comes in about four tracks west of the depot; and the van to Ogden loads in front, so for a number of transferring passengers there is a long walk with luggage.

It was the end of another ride on one of the world's greatest short travel experiences. I hope we can each con-tinue to do it year after year!

SECTION FOUR: FUTURE OF THE RGZ

Now that Rio Grande is legally free to apply for discontinuance of its ZEPHYR, what are the railroad's plans? RTN asked this question of D&RGW management and was told that the railroad has no plans to seek discontinuance. Altho the president of the railroad would like to see the "staggering" losses on its passenger service, including the Silverton-Durango service, eliminated, it realistically feels that the chances of getting approval to drop service would be "nil" at this time, considering the energy crunch. It's true, the railroad told us, that ridership has dropped off in recent months. That was attributed to the greater recent availability of gasoline, and to the public's cutting back on pleasure travel because of the recessionary economy. The railroad is approaching the summer season with "trepidation" because of its passenger deficit. Losses are "tremendous" in the dining car, for instance. Labor costs are high, amounting to 180% of the revenue taken in. But the road feels that good dining is a necessity. The railroad is operating under a mandate from top management, we were told, to do the best job possible as long as the train runs. The railroad has made no overtures to Amtrak, or vice versa. The road is currently refurbishing the last of its cars to be redecorated: "Silver Colt" dome coach. A new range has been recently installed in the diner. From personal observations and reports of others, crews are optimistic and happy, unlike the sullen, depressed workers one encountered so often on pre-Amtrak trains facing likely discontinuance. Rumors fly around about plans for dropping the train, but the official word at this point is that the status quo will be maintained for awhile longer. A good time to take advantage of a real travel treat and ride the train yourself. Both coach and parlor accommodations are available.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS (continued from page 8)

Devotees of the RIO GRANDE and CALIFORNIA ZEPHYRS will be interested in an article in the May issue of Trains Magazine, desdribing a ride on the SFZ-RGZ, retracing the route ofthe old CZ, which was discontinued just five years ago this month..... AUTO-TRAIN SAYS that it lost $70,000 in the quarter ended Jan. 31, mostly because of startup costs for its Louisville-Florida service, which has recently been cut back..... BOSTON & MAINE'S 6100, the first RDC to be purchaxed by the railroad in 1952 is back in service after a year's absence on the scrap track where it had been stripped for parts, report Pete Roehm and Dave Foley. It has been reborn as the first of the MBTA-B&M "new look" cars for the refurbished Budd fleet. They also report that the MBTA will acauire five 1750hp circa 1956 GP9's from the Penn Central and rebuild them with 600kw auxiliary engine and generator fortrain lighting, heat-ing and air conditioning. Twenty 1947-era 78-psgr PS coaches will also be acquired and rebuilt with electric heating and control lines and 84 seats. Some units will be refitted with control positions to permit push-pull operation in conjunction with rebuilt GP9's. The MBTA will also assume ownership ofthe PC's 7 Budds presently in Boston service that were built aobut 1952 with 550 hp engines and 84 seats. They will be given 670hp engines and 92 seats.....

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(continued from page 17)

RTN: But you say now it's held only 24 hours?

ATK: Right now it is. We're in the process of capturing all these P and R's after they leave, putting them on microfilm. We could probably put one year's worth in a desk drawer. And when a complaint comes in, it may take 2 or 3 months for "due process." This gives us time to go back and pull out and try to analyze what happened to this particular passenger.

RTN: It's a problem at the moment then.

ATK: Right now it is. Minor in some cases. We still have access to it, but it's really cumbersome. We'd have to search the printed record and the system each night and for us to go back and research, it's really a problem.

RTN: Let's go back to our Mr. Jones. What happens if we get up from the machine now and get distracted, and our "demo" transaction is left in the computer and the fictional Mr. Jones never shows up and never pays for his ticket. What happens to the space?

ATK: That's where the hold limit applies. Every day the system produces all the passenger records that have a hold limit of that day on all trains.

RTN: That's a huge sheet there.

ATK: It isn't as big as you may think. It's broken down in train date order. I'll just arbitrarily open it up, on train 171. These passengers, they're supposed to board on this day. These are their phone numbers. We send this up to our reservation bureau and they do passenger call-backs. They say, "Sir, you have a reservation on train 171 on Dec. 19 and your hold limit has expired. Do you intend to use your reservation?" "Oh, no, I meant to cancel that" or "I'm not going to pick it up until the 21st." Then they update this limit so it goes on to the next week.

RTN: Do they always try to contact the person?

ATK: Yes.

RTN: If you can't contact him, then it's automatically cancelled after the hold date expires?

ATK: After two attempts; one in the morning, one at night. After that it's cancelled. We find that we pick up a considerable amount of space this way and minimize the no-show factor. We don't really have an obligation to call the passenger.

RTN: Just a courtesy.

ATK: Like some airlines just up and tell you it's cancelled. But if you're dealing with the traveling public... For example, I took Eastern Airlines to Miami last year, and if I failed to reconfirm they said it would cancel. When you travel Amtrak it's not that way. If you travel American Airlines it's a different policy too. So people do get confused with the carrier that they're with. So rather than create a problem, we try to call the passenger back. This is done daily, sent up to the reservation bureau, and it takes considerable time.

RTN: I'm just wondering what happens if I miss my 5:05 train to Baltimore this afternoon. I could take the 6 o'clock Metroliner, but I must make sure I have a Metroliner ticket... Yes, I do, but it's not reserved. Why don't you reserve me a seat while we're here?

ATK: Okay, let me cancel Mr. Jones. I'm taking him out of the books. And if we go back to the history I talked about earlier, it'll show who cancelled it. It shows here all the activity I did on this train, on this P and R. I made the record at 12:45pm--by the way, that's Pacific Time; only because the system has to go to its maximum. If we were on Eastern Standard Time, at 10pm in L.A. it would be a day later in system logic. We have to stay in a 24-hour operation.

RTN: Could I punch up my reservation on my train tonight?

ATK: You want to reserve a seat?

RTN: Let me do the punching. Make sure I don't make a mistake.

ATK: It will tell you, "Hey, you made a mistake." You now ask "reserve a space." Then move the punch.

RTN: And this'll be train number 124.

ATK: Put the train number in. You can use any set of numbers, whichever are convenient.

RTN: Reserve space/124, space from Wash, now dash, dash to Baltimore, space, date 12/5...

ATK: Now a new line. Now tell me what you want. You need one coach seat.

RTN: Metroliner coach seat.

ATK: Which is "G"... and the number of seats you want. And now "send"... send up there, now it says it's accepting it. And if it takes it, it'll give you your combination. You have it.

RTN: Okay, very good. Now this "C" here. That's the C that'll go in my code?

ATK: Exactly. Now you want to create a passenger name for yourself. So reset.

RTN: It says, 124C Wash-Baltimore, 12-05, 06pm, A1 G1 (the G is the Metroliner)... Okay, reset.

ATK: Now you want to create a P and R for yourself.

RTN: PN space...

ATK: Now your name. Last name first, Bretz comma Peter, space, and the phone number, or you can put "none" in this case. Space, put P...

RTN: P stands for what?

ATK: You're the passenger who made the space. And put a hold limit of 12-5, today. 12-5, "send," now it will compute your fare level, what it's going to cost you to take this trip and create your P and R simultaneously. Costs you $6 to go.

RTN: PN 119567.

ATK: That's your "record address."

RTN: $6 CRC.

ATK: That means you made it on my record number. One ticket, one full fare for this A number which associates with this coach seat costing you $6. And that's your itinerary.

RTN: It doesn't know that I'm already ticketed.

ATK: No it doesn't. But you're not really ticketed. You have an open ticket.

RTN: That's why I made the reservation. It says "unreserved Metrocoach ticket."

ATK: All you have to do in this case is have it revalidated to show the correct train number. And when you go over to the station today you just say "I have a reservation on this train" and he'll retrieve this record thru the TK that we did before.

RTN: Now if it turns out that I get out of here on time and I make the 5:05 train, what will happen to this if nothing else is done?

ATK: One no-show.

RTN: Oh, I see. Shame on me.

ATK: You wouldn't do that to us.

RTN: How can I look at the other reservations I already have in the computer?

ATK: Punch WR--what reservations, and your name, and the train number.

RTN: I forgot the train number, but I know the date.

ATK: If I were the agent, I'd be asking where you are going. From Washington to Chicago. We only have a couple of trains that go there. We have the WHITCOMB RILEY or 41, so that's not too bad, but if you were going New York-Philadelphia it may be a problem. Now you know you're leaving on the tenth. Where are you going?

RTN: To Chicago.

ATK: And where are you leaving from?

RTN: I don't know whether the ticket says Baltimore or Washington.

ATK: Fair enough. So I would say WT --what train goes between Washington and Chicago on 12-10. It tells me that there's 51 and 441-41. Then I say it's one of two trains.

RTN: What reservation for... we could have gone back to the memory, couldn't we?

ATK: We could have. Then you put 441-41 and the date. Now "send", and if it's there, it will come out. Hmmm. Now according to this, your reservation is cancelled.

RTN: My reservation is <u>cancelled</u>?

ATK: According to this you don't have a "live" itinerary. Let's go back. What history (WH). I want to see what happened to your reservation. According to this, you had a coach seat on the 10th from Wash to Harrisburg on a slumbercoach. This was done on the 25th, and according to this you cancelled. Well, you cancelled within 4 minutes.

RTN: Well, the girl down there did it, and apparently it was all there in the computer and it was all checked out.

ATK: It was there, but she booked it and 4 minutes later it was cancelled by the same person for some reason. I don't know why. Let me try something else. It may be misspelled and there may be two records for you in there. You put your name in exactly and there could be two records for you. So you notice I'm putting in a portion of your name--BRE. There you are.

RTN: Look at that. Two of them.

ATK: Now "WR." Now you do have a reservation. She cancelled the other one because she found out you were past all that. Now from Baltimore to Harrisburg you have a coach seat. Here's your specific assignment. Then you're taking a roomette, the 4132 on the 10th from Harrisburg to Chicago. "Page one" means there's more information on you. This reservation means you're going from Chicago to Galesburg. Then on the 11th...and I don't know how you're getting back to Chicago...

RTN: The ILLINOIS ZEPHYR.

ATK: There's no reservation on that, since it's unreserved. Then you're taking #5 to Oakland, then you're taking #11, the Coast train. She thought you were a full paying passenger, and then she realized it and in 2 minutes she cancelled it. And then she put it in properly. You want a copy of this? This is a perfect P and R.

RTN: Yes, I would.

ATK: I'm going to say "Send a message." We'll send it to one of our printers, "attention Mr. Bretz." How's that? And it's printing on our machine now.

RTN: That's excellent.

ATK: We're not going to get into the complexities of our re-accommodation process, but we send messages back and forth.

RTN: Thank you very much for your time and effort, Mr. Scolaro.

* * *

I came away from the computer console much wiser, but still confused. There is quite a bit of capacity in the ARTS, and the more Amtrak can utilize it, the better.

I left L'Enfant Plaza a few minutes later and took advantage of the Metroliner reservation I had actually punched up and "made" by myself.

Rail Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL HAS drawn up specifications for a new type of intercity passenger train using conventional technology, according to Garth Campbell, CN's new passenger VP. He said that LRC equipment, with its 120mph top speed, would be suitable once new passenger equipment is ordered. Purchase of any new equipment will be made by the federal government, as burgeoning inflation and freight traffic have diverted all available capital funds to freight operations, according to Campbell. Until new equipment is obtained, CN's ability to improve passenger operations is limited by the equipment now on hand, he said.

CN WILL ADD a second TurboTrain round trip to Ottawa-Montreal service with the April time change, the railway has announced. It also announced that it will seek to operate service Toronto-London, Ont., in the western portion of Canada's "corridor" at least every two hours throughout the day, depending on availability of equipment. The LRC locomotive and protype coach entered operation London-Sarnia (opposite Pt. Huron, Mich.) on March 3.

R. L. GRASSBY, president of MLW-Worthington, designers and fabricators of the LRC advanced passenger train coach, has announced his firm has received 11 inquiries about possible purchase of the train, which will consist of five cars and one locomotive. Those inquiring have included the states of New York, Illinois and Michigan. The Northeastern Ontario Ass'n is preparing a brief to the Ontario government at Queens Park requesting the province sponsor LRC day-train service between Toronto and Cochrane, over the Ontario Northland along the same route as ONR's existing overnight run to the mining districts.

THE PRINCESS MARGUERITE may not be returning to the Victoria-Seattle run. The ship abandoned by CP Rail last fall is scheduled to be replaced by a smaller vessel, "The Avalon," which has been running between Southern California and Mexico. The service is to be operated by Seattle Harbor Tours, owned by Lynn Campbell, with the aid of two California associates. The 510-passenger, aluminum vessel uses only a 7-man crew. It will be renamed, and fares will be set at $16.80 round trip, compared to the former CP Rail fare of $14.00. Service is planned to start May 1.

THE LOST TRAIN: Passengers aboard CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL found themselves on what a conductor described as a "lost train" not long after its Feb. 12 departure from Vancouver. In heavy snows, the train lost 8½ hours at Hope, B.C. when a snowplow ahead derailed. A second snowplow sent in was partially buried by a snowslide. Finally a third plow and work crew hand shoveled the others out. "When we get this far behind schedule, we're just a lost train," said the conductor. "We just get all the other trains fouled up." The SUPER lost 2 more hours before reaching the end of the transcon run, and passengers spent 4 instead of 3 nights on the train, something like the schedule CN has set beginning with the April time changeover (see RTN, 1st Feb. Issue).

GO TRANSIT COMMUTER trains between Toronto and Hamilton, Ont. will be re-routed into the TH&B station at Hamilton effective the last week in April. Two trains originate and terminate in Hamilton Mon.-Fri., presently at the CN station. The closer-to-downtown TH&B station, also used by the Buffalo-Toronto RDC's of CP Rail, is expected to help increase patronage. About 28 passengers per day use the runs.

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION on Feb. 26 published its report of the investigation of the headon collision between train 45, THE EXEC, and eastbound freight train Extra 9487 East at 8:24pm last Dec. 20, at mileage 187.4 on CN near Ernestown, Ontario. The investigating committee concluded that the freight had run a red signal, and that trainman present in the cab with the engineer had inadequate knowledge of emergency air brake application and could not operate the train radio. He had been in railroad service for 5 months. The committee recommended improved surveillance of train and engine crews when they report for duty. Of the 239 passengers on THE EXEC, one woman was killed and 171 injured, of whom 45 were hospitalized, one still in the hospital. The engineers of both trains were killed in the wreck and 9 cr3wmen injured.

CN'S TURBOTRAIN SERVICE continues to operate reliably, according to CN, and may be one reason that rail passenger volume in Central Canada has climbed 25-40% in the past two years. Afternoon Montreal-Toronto runs now average 75% occupancy for the train's 372 seats. The morning turbo runs, inaugurated at a later date, are averaging 50%, CN said. The Toronto Globe & Mail reported that the 4hr,10min running time is making a serious appeal to airline-oriented businessmen, who travel "Club" for $33. Coach seats ranging in price from $18 to $21.25, are also sold out many days.

DESPITE IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE by CN's Turbo since service resumed in early 1974, CN is apparently moving in other directions when new equipment is ordered. The Globe & Mail reported: "The design team that put the train together has been disbanded, the train cannot be broken apart when something goes wrong, and the new railway requirements are for current technology in new combinations." In a separate report, the Globe outlined CN's "Life With Turbo" in the trying 1968-1973 period: "When you ask CN officials about the early days of the Turbo, they go rigid, their toes curl up, and smoke comes out of their ears." The paper also pointed out that the exceptionally light cars sway much more than conventional cars when going thru switches at terminals and junctions. CN is operating the 3 remaining Turbos on lease. The original order of 5 7-car trains was converted to 3 9-car trains for the 1974 resumption of service. Two smaller 4-car trains were assembled from the leftover CN units for Amtrak service in the U.S. One of the U.S. units collided with a freight train and was destroyed by firenear Montreal in July 1973, prior to delivery to Amtrak. One year later, United Aircraft, which designed the TurboTrains, announced it was abandoning the Turbo project.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

AS THE ATLANTA MARTA system broke ground to begin construction of the city's 50-mile rapid transit system, federal officlas were conceding it is now almost certain that the city will not obtain the 80% federal funding for the project on which MARTA had been couting heavily. MARTA officials are looking for more funding rather than cut back the scope of the project..... William T. Coleman, Jr., newly-appointed Secretary of Transportation, has endorsed increased capital aid to public transportation systems, but has also urged continuation of major road building programs. Quote: "Society's best hope is not turning away from the automobile..." He has backed a multi-billion-dollar roadbed improvement program in the Northeast Corridor.

THE CIVILIZED RAILFAN WEEKEND

Once again, the Twentieth Century Railroad Club presents a weekend of rail activities on April 19 & 20 that is sure to appeal to even the most discriminating of rail enthusiasts.

RailFair: 1975 offers a wide array of exciting features, starting out with the renowned Chicago Railfan Luncheon, highlighted by guest speaker Rogers E. M. Whitaker author of the best-selling All Aboard With E. M. Frimbo and Mel Patrick's RGZ tribute, "Zephyr West". Then, on to Carbondale via Amtrak's PANAMA LIMITED, for some private steaming the next day on the Crab Orchard & Egyptian RR, and many exciting extras and surprises to enhance the thrill of railfanning.

For further information, send a self addressed stamped envelope to the Twentieth Century Railroad Club, Dept. R-1, 10700 S. Seeley, Chicago, IL 60643.

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PLAN YOUR FAMILY VACATION around the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TIMETABLE COLLECTORS Annual Convention in Philadelphia (the Bicentennial City) July 31, Aug 1, 2, 3 at the Penn Center Sheraton Hotel. 4 big days of buying, selling & trading railroadiana plus fan trips, a fabulous banquet featuring the renowned Bruce Heard, Chief of Amtrak Timetables, an auction and much more. Full particulars on the convention and membership from Bob Russell, 400 S. Chester Pike, Apt 6-B, Glenolden PA 19036 (215) 212-7251. Be there to believe it.

QUALITY B&W NEGATIVES: Shortlines, industrials, mainline, passenger trains. Send 50¢ for list and sample. T. N. Colbert, 1008 Englewood, Parma, Ohio 44134.

TIMETABLE BARGAINS GALORE, GRAB BAGS, $13 worth of Public Timetables only $6.00, $30 worth only $12.00. Also have amazing clear plastic slip covers for public timetables only 8¢ each postpaid. Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Rd., Holland PA 18966.

POSTCARDS of RR depots wanted-used ok. M. Blunker, 4573 E. Iowa, Fresno CA 93702.

MENU COLLECTORS- Exact reprints of SP Dining Car Menus: Lark, Cascade, Golden State, City of San Francisco, Sunset: 1951-67. Complete set of 15 menus for $12. Will sell separately, or consider trade. Send SSAE for list.
Dennis Ryan, 435 N. Euclid #20, Pasadena, Calif. 91101.

Ideas for an Amtrak "Spirit of 76": Name the Chic.-Cincy-DC and Norfolk-Cincy trains, the GEORGE WASHINGTON and THOMAS JEFFERSON, run the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR for summer '76, and get Atlanta and Cleveland on the Amtrak map. Write Amtrak and your congressman. Thank you. Merlin L. Marlowe, RR 2, Fairfax, MN 55332.

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE uniform and vest buttons, nickel and gold finish 60¢ ea. or all four $2.25. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

CONRAIL AND THE NORTHEAST! Get the latest update on Conrail plans, abandonments and gateways in THE BLOCK LINE, official news bulletin of Tri-State Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. Issued monthly except July & August. Only $3.50 per year postpaid. WRITE: TRI-STATE NRHS c/o Tom Nemeth, 210 Perrine Avenue, Piscataway, New Jersey 08854.

DID YOU KNOW that the Virginia Midland is part of the Southern Ry system? This is one of the things you learn when you join over 100 railfans in the Southern Ry Historical Society. We cover subsidiaries and predecessors also. $5 per year. SSAE for info. SRHS, 3587 Jonathan Circle, Augusta, GA 30906.

INFORMATION FOR ADVERTISERS

The following change in our advertising policy will become effective after the publication of this issue: the maximum ad size for display ads will be ½-page, or 5x4 (or 2½x8) inches. The cost of this is $12.50, with smaller sizes priced in proportion. This change is necessary in order to conserve the extremely limited amount of space available for ads. Please try to keep your ad as small and compact as possible. It will still receive good attention from readers, since the total magazine size is small. EXPRESS AD RATES: 50¢ per line for line of 80 characters and spaces. Please enclose your remittance with order. Thank you.
Write: MESSAGE MEDIA - RTN, Advertising Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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THE DISCONTINUANCE OF Amtrak's BAY STATE on the Boston-Springfield-New York route after Feb. 28 was met with criticism. The BAY STATE was the first 403-B (partly state-supported) service run by Amtrak. When the first contract expired in July, 1973, Massachusetts wanted a $5000 penalty for over-30-min late trains written in. Amtrak claimed it had no authority to write such an agreement, and went on running the train without contract or state reimbursement. Then it announced the February discontinuance. James Ullman of Meriden, CT, a committee chairman trying to reinstate the train, says the route should be "one of Amtrak's very best railroads," if track and stations were upgraded. Tom Wicker in the New York Times (Feb. 28) criticized the loss, but praised the efforts by all concerned to try all over again.